

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1850

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E. O. 11652: NA

TAGS: ORIT, RP

SUBJECT: CHURCH TAKES EXPECTED OFFICIAL STAND AGAINST DIVORCE

REF: MANILA 1782

1. CBCP (CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE) USED OCCASION FEBRUARY 4 INAUGURATION CEREMONY FOR ARCHDIOCESE OF MANILA'S NEW INFORMATION CENTER TO ISSUE ITS OFFICIAL POSITION ON DIVORCE (SEE REFTEL), IN PRESENCE INVITED LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRESS. IN ABSENCE CBCP PRESIDENT CARDINAL ROSALES WHO DELAYED AT PRESIDENTIAL PALACE (SEE BELOW), STATEMENT READ BY MANILA ARCHBISHOP JAIME SIN. ALTHOUGH COUCHED IN THEOLOGICAL LANGUAGE, MESSAGE PLAINLY WAS "NO DICE" (CHARACTERIZATION GIVEN EMBASSY BY CBCP ASSISTANT SECRETARY GENERAL FR. BUHAIN) AS REGARDED LEGALIZATION OF DIVORCE. IN INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT, SIN ALSO EXPLAINED THERE WOULD BE LONGER PASTORAL LETTER EXPLORING PASTORAL SOLUTIONS AND REMEDIES TO PROBLEMS FACING THE FAITHFUL. ACCORDING BUHAIN, PASTORAL LETTER WOULD NOT COME OUT UNTIL MID-MARCH, HOWEVER.

2. DURING COURSE BRIEF CONVERSATION BEFORE CEREMONY, ARCHBISHOP SIN TOLD LABATT THAT CARDINAL ROSALES AND CBCP'S 7-MAN ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL WERE AT THAT MOMENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MARCOS AT MALACANANG. PURPOSE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PALACE MEETING WAS TO GIVE MARCOS LETTER FROM PHILIP-

PINE BISHOPS IN WHICH ALTERNATIVES TO PROPOSED DIVORCE DECREE WERE SUGGESTED. EMBASSY LATER LEARNED THAT LAW FACULTY AT UST (UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS) CONTRIBUTED TO DRAFTING OF THIS MESSAGE TO MARCOS.

3. COMMENT: CBCP DIVORCE STATEMENT WAS APPARENTLY RESULT OF THREE DRAFTS DURING CBCP BAGUIO MEETING (REFTEL), AND AS CONSEQUENCE, CONSIDERABLY WATERED DOWN AND MILD IN TONE. SOURCES CLOSE TO ARCHBISHOP, HOWEVER, HAVE NOTED HE WILL BE SPEAKING OUT IN STRONGER LANGUAGE AGAINST DIVORCE IN COMING DAYS. ACTUAL STATUS OF GOP'S PROPOSED DIVORCE DECREE UNKNOWN, AND BISHOPS' APPEAL TO MARCOS MAY FURTHER DELAY PROMULGATION. ON OTHER HAND, ONE RUMOR GOING AROUND CHURCH CIRCLES HAS IT THAT MARCOS CONSIDERING SIGNING LEGALIZATION OF DIVORCE DECREE ON FEBRUARY 14 (ST. VALENTINE DAY) AS "GIFT OF LOVE" TO PEOPLE.
SULLIVAN

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